

For nearly fifty years George W. Gardner has been traversing America—by motorcycle, by car, and in his private plane—to make a portrait of a country he knows to the depth of his soul. His book of photographs, *America Illustrated*, was published in 1982.

In the forward to the book Douglas Kenyon has written:

America Illustrated is a collection of photographs about us, the people of America....

With surroundings all too familiar to us, [George W. Gardner] shows us an America we have never seen. His pictures reveal an uncommon ability to isolate, contemplate, and often celebrate those moments. Within the confines of the photographs, the pictures are complete; but often they imply a much larger, more complex situation. This added quality of ambiguity takes the photographs far beyond the simple recording of a given moment.

With that very personal Gardner wit and affection, George shows us our emotions, our rituals, our triumphs, our absurdities—the world we have created. He forces us to reflect upon ourselves and our American Dream for better or for worse.

Among the many reasons for which I will always be grateful to Hugh Edwards, the renowned former curator of photography at the Art Institute of Chicago, is the fact that he first showed me the photographs of George Gardner. Edwards who once said, “Anything can be art, but very little is,” would greatly applaud this book.

Jim Hughes, in his introduction to *America Illustrated*, wrote of his first meeting with George W. Gardner:

Soon, he opened his sample case to reveal hundreds of glowing black-and-white prints. Images of America exploded like so many coiled springs into my already cluttered office, finally covering every available surface, including the floor....

I was seeing, clearly and possibly for the first time, middle America, which is all America: the America of Saturday afternoon high school football, concrete highways to towns named Fate, and undeclared wars featured on the six o'clock news. This was not Apple Pie America, nor Glamor America, nor Ugly America, nor Bloody America. This was America as it must be, and I was seeing it because a citizen named George Gardner was taking me there.

“America is my place,” Gardner explains. “I have no choice, and I have always felt that. Anyplace else, I’m just a tourist, I don’t connect. In America, I feel as if I have some deep notion of what’s going on. I am trying to get at what I think about America. I can *feel* this country.

“But the connection between me and it is tenuous enough so that I really do have to pay attention. Otherwise, I will lose it. So I don’t relax.”

Staten Island Ferry, 1967



GEORGE W. GARDNER **AMERICA ILLUSTRATED**



Untitled, 1968

CHRONOLOGY

- 1940 Born in Albany, New York
- 1964 Received B.A. degree in Anthropology, University of Missouri

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1983 Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
- 1982 Douglas Kenyon Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1980 Catskill Center for Photography, Woodstock, NY
- 1979 Midtown Y Gallery, New York, NY
- 1978 Sunprint Gallery, Madison, WI
- 1967 Purdue University, Lafayette, IN

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1979 The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, "Discovering America: A Tribute to Hugh Edwards"
- 1977 Neikrug Gallery, New York, NY, "Rated X"
- 1969 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, "Contemporary Photography II"

PUBLICATIONS

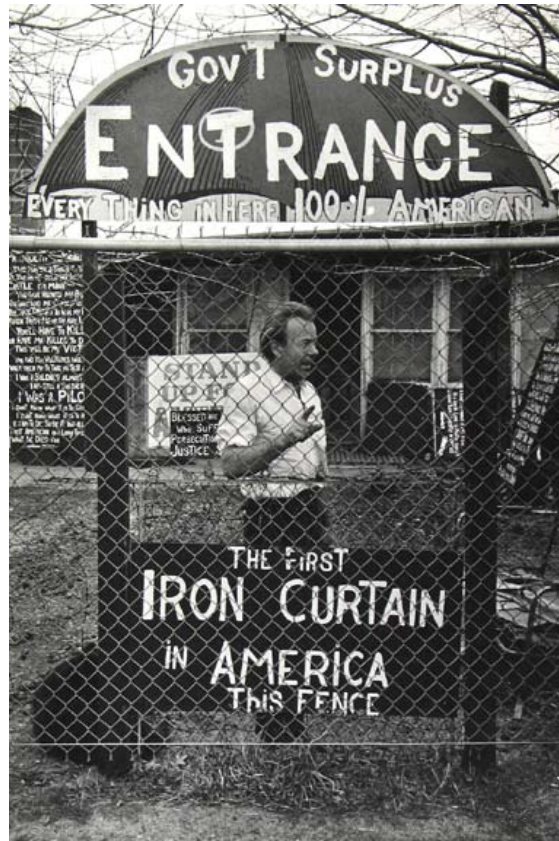
- 1985 *Gun People*, Dolphin Book, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, NY
- 1983 *George W. Gardner, 1960-1980*, The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
- 1983 *Documentary Photography*, Time-Life Inc., New York, NY, rev. ed.
- 1982 *America Illustrated: Photographs by George W. Gardner, 1960-1980*, Tackfield Ltd., London & Chicago, IL
- 1977 *Popular Photography "How-To Guide"*
- 1972 *Creative Camera*, February, 1972

COLLECTIONS

- The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- DePaul University Art Museum, Chicago, IL
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
- Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
- The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC

AWARDS

- 1980-81 New York State Creative Artists Public Service (CAPS) Fellowship



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Our special thanks to Charles Gatewood for bringing the photographs of George W. Gardner to our attention.

Front cover:

Photographer's Storefront, Northern New Mexico, 1967.

Austin, Texas, 1967



Cairo, Illinois, 1970



Airport, Joliet, Illinois, 1970



Ozark Mountains, Southern Missouri, 1967

